



Natomas Oral Histories

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Oral interview of

Paul Shimada

October 4 and 11, 1996

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Mr. Farrell: I'm here with Mr. Paul Shimada and we're doing an interview for the Natomas Oral History Project. We're at the South Natomas Library. It's October 4, 1996. It's about 1:50 in the afternoon, and my name is Paul Farrell. To begin with, Mr. Shimada, can you tell me a little about yourself? When you were born, where you were born, and maybe about your family, your father and your mother?

Mr. Shimada: I was born in a small community called Woodbridge, which would be northwest of Lodi. And the community has not grown very much even since then. Shortly thereafter, I moved into the Galt school district which is northeast of that area.

Mr. Farrell: What year were you born?

Mr. Shimada: 1916. December 5, 1916.

Mr. Farrell: So, you moved from there. Where did you move?

[00:01:22:]

Mr. Shimada: To an area called Bruella, B-R-U-E-L-L-A, school district. Father was still alive then. He was farming 20 acres of orchard, mixed orchard — apricots, peaches, pears, plums. And the peaches, when the market was cheap, we dried them, cut and dried them. The apricots we dried them for the dried food market. The buyer for the dried food market was a representative of Rosenberg Brothers, a company in San Francisco. The dealer was a fellow by the name of Montgomery. I did business with him, quite a bit. I was still underage. He'd go to the bank and tell them, "Give Paul what he needs. I'll stand good for it." I had a pretty good reputation in the Lodi community because I had passed many of my merit badges in the Boy Scouts. I got to be known by the merchants. So, they knew who I was already. My credit was unlimited. After we got started farming, and I bought my new Ford truck, people in the Japanese community wondered, where did he get his money? We were so poor out there on the farm. Like I said, I had unlimited credit. Within the second year, I had bought two semi-trailers. That really opened their eyes. I went to Stockton to the John H. Eagle Company. He was active in the scouting program, there.

[00:03:44]

Mr. Farrell: So, you feel that Boy Scouts is what got you your credit?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah. With that unlimited credit, I was able to buy a 22 Caterpillar. When that 22 Caterpillar was too light, we traded that back in for an RD 4 orchard model. At that time, there were only two RD 4s in the district. One was owned by John LaFigna, an Italian property owner who owned the [unintelligible] — I think his son still owns half of the Lake business district, including Hotel Lodi. The Japanese fellows when they heard that, their eyes puffed out. "How does he do that?" One of the questions that was asked, "Why don't you associate with us?" I didn't associate with my own people. I was always with the so-called white group. I came right out and told them, "Associating with you fellows won't establish my credit downtown." Their eyes popped out on that. They knew I had unlimited credit.

[00:05:18]

So, by the time I got my second semi, I was really in the trucking business. We used to haul peaches all the way down to Sunnyvale, for Libby-McNeil. The Morris-Grand Company of Oakland had the prime contract of McNeil. I got acquainted with the chief dispatcher, who was named Dee Hatch. Hatch saw that I was trustworthy, that I could be trusted upon. He gave me subcontracts for communities up in the hills — Placerville, Loomis, and all these little communities. The high school kids were loading trucks in

those days. These were those 50-pound boxes, and I would treat them to ice cream. Hot —they would get all sweaty. So, I would treat them to ice cream, and because I treated the ice cream, those kids would lie to the other truckers and would have a load hid for me every day. Can you imagine! So, sometimes I would make two trips to the Bay Area. 5 o'clock in the morning. 6 o'clock, I'm up in the foothills and dropping off boxes to farmers. Farmers really liked that because they had boxes early in the morning. So, one thing after another led to my success in trucking. Then, finally, I got married.

Mr. Farrell: What year was that?

Mr. Shimada: I think it was 1948. I forget a lot of the dates. But, I married a gal who was working in the library in the Military Intelligence Language School, Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Mr. Farrell: You were married in Minnesota?

Mr. Shimada: I married in Minnesota. I went back there.

Mr. Farrell: What were you doing back there?

[00:07:45]

Mr. Shimada: I was stationed there during the war, military intelligence school. I was a company clerk and I worked up to acting first sergeant. A lot of other guys didn't know that I knew the head of the post. He was an attorney from Sacramento. So, time came when the Military Intelligence School was transferred to Monterey and then from Monterey they sent people to Japan. About that time, my mother was pretty ill with diabetes. The wages we earned in the military were nowhere near enough to support her and her doctor's costs. So, I applied for an honorable dependency discharge. All the guys at the fort said, "You'll never get it." But, that didn't discourage me for a moment. I went and explained to the head of the fort why I had to ask for the discharge. So, when they moved the school, they gave me a travel allowance — that was during the days when we had gas rationing. I knew the people at the gas ration board because I was also doing some lease farming in Davisson, Michigan, which was only some 30 miles away from Flint, I guess it was. So, he said, "Take vegetables in there to them." Vegetables were hard to get in those days. You had those food ration stamps and all that kind of stuff. So, I circumvented all that, and I had all the food ration stamps I wanted, and all the gas ration stamps I wanted. Unlimited. That's what happened during the war days.

[00:10:28]

Mr. Farrell: What happened to your mother during the war days?

Mr. Shimada: She was confined. She was a diabetic. We didn't pay any attention. Not that we didn't pay attention to her — she wouldn't say nothing. She would hold back until finally she got to a point where she couldn't walk up and down the stairs. My next brother used to carry her up and down. When we found out she was diabetic, we made an appointment to have it checked out. She was so far along, she had to have her leg amputated. It kept on getting worse because she didn't know what a diet was.

Mr. Farrell: Now, your father, he died earlier?

Mr. Shimada: He died earlier from cirrhosis of the liver. He was a drinker, made his own booze. He could out-drink anybody. Get all his friends drunk. I remember sometimes we would go out to the old shed

where he had his wine barrels, turn on the spigot, and let it all run out on the ground. That used to make him so mad.

Mr. Farrell: Now, he was distilling it or was he fermenting wine? He was making the hard stuff?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, he would make his own whiskey. So strong he could turn the cup upside down and pour a little out of the cup and put a match there for a light; that's how strong it was. So, that finally got him, this disease called cirrhosis of the liver. He finally passed away. I took him down to the Stockton County Hospital. That was near French Camp. We had a little old Model T Ford. I used to drive that. And after that, we bought a passenger car, which he had to learn to drive. But, he couldn't drive. He couldn't shift! He couldn't get the coordination of shifting. So, he's passed away. Thereafter, I took over farming activities. Thereon, I grew and grew.

[00:12:55]

Mr. Farrell: How old were you when you took over?

Mr. Shimada: A junior in high school, so that would be about 16. I was still underage, and yet I was able to buy all this stuff because of my credit.

Mr. Farrell: Now you were in the Boy Scouts, did you become an Eagle Scout?

Mr. Shimada: Oh, yeah. I called myself Triple Eagle, because I got 72 merit badges. In fact, my goal was to get all the merit badges that were available then. It was around 80 merit badges. I couldn't get the radio one, a few of the electrical badges coming into the electronics at that time — it was rather new, and I wasn't very good on that. But, I got all the agricultural merit badges they had. Practically all the personal health. I even got the interpreting merit badge. The reverend at the local church was the examiner, and he was amazed. He said, "What language are you going to use?" "I'll use German." He says, "You speak German?" I said, "Ein sprechen." He said, "Can you read this?" He handed me a bible. I'd never read a bible before. He opened it and said, "Start reading." I could read that. He was just flabbergasted. It was a good thing I knew German, because when I went to the World Jamboree in Japan, I ran into a linguistic problem. Twenty-two thousand scouts and leaders. We were divided into two different camps. I was in Camp B. They had a scoutmasters round table every night to give instructions for the next day and comments on what had happened during the day. The Japanese leaders there had a very difficult time in speaking English. They would talk among themselves for a long period of time and the other scoutmasters were getting impatient. So, I walked up there and tapped one fellow on the shoulder and said, "I can speak German and I can speak English, I'll help you out." Boy, their eyes lit up and they asked, "Dozo, dozo?" It means *please*. I had explained it in English to our group and all the English-speaking groups first, quickly. Then I go into the detail in German and Spanish. I was able to speak Spanish then, too, quite fluently. So, our guys say, "How come, Paul, you told us very briefly and you took so long to tell the others?" I said, "You fellows understand English — I give you the short version." They just roared.

[00:16:15]

Mr. Farrell: Now you learned your German and your Spanish when you were living down near Lodi?

Mr. Shimada: I learned my German in high school in Lodi, because Lodi is a strong German community. Then, when I came up to Sacramento, I went to Sac State to learn Spanish at night because I employed so many Spanish-speaking people here on the farm. Guys working for me on the farm, they pretended

not to know when I was telling them in English what to do. So, I speak Spanish to them, their eyes would pop out. They'd try to cheat me by putting full boxes on top of empty boxes on a stack. I can tell right away because of the empty boxes, there's a crack there and there's no tomatoes there. I'd dock them for it and they'd argue with me when I'd come to pay them in cash. I'd say, "I seen the empty boxes." In fact, I'd call them up, and for these empty boxes, I'd deduct an empty plus a full one. That's the penalty for cheating.

Mr. Farrell: Stiff penalty.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, they woke up. And then another interesting thing about this tomato picking crew — every day, I'd stop the crew about 2:30 in the afternoon. It's hot in the afternoon. We'd start at 6 in the morning. It was hot in the afternoon. I'd pay them off in cash and take them into town. I found this property on the Garden Highway where the boat dock is, that area. So, I was about five minutes out of town. So, they were back in town earlier than anyone else was and were able to rent a room. And room rents then were only 50 cents a night.

[00:18:29]

Mr. Farrell: What year was that when they were able to rent a room at 50 cents a night?

Mr. Shimada: About 1948. Somewhere along in that year. So then, the good pickers, I started giving them tickets to get on the truck in the morning downtown. That opened the eyes of all the neighboring farmers: "What the hell's he got that he can be so selective?" The good pickers, I'd give them a ticket to get on the truck. The other guys that tried to get on — no ticket, no truck. That kept the good pickers with me. So, when the picking got poor, they still came out and helped me pick the poorer sections. On top of that, I gave them a free lunch. I'd go down to the markets there on Northgate and pick up the trimmed lettuce leaves and I'd go buy day-old bread, and they'd make 150 sandwiches from 11 o'clock to noon, just quickly.

Mr. Farrell: A hundred and fifty — you had that many working for you?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, I had as many as 250 out in the fields.

Mr. Farrell: Well, let's go back now. Denise Modar, she told me that you came to this area in '48. You said you got married in '48, and you got out of the army in '48?

Mr. Shimada: Somewhere in there. I don't remember exactly. I got discharged here where McClellan Air Force Base is now.

Mr. Farrell: So, you moved to Natomas. Did you buy a home, some land here?

[00:20:18]

Mr. Shimada: No, first I stayed with my uncle and an aunt in Lodi for a few days, so I could get settled. I was driving a truck and hauling peaches in Rio Linda and up in this area. I come down through Garden Highway. It is a main road to Sacramento. I seen this area here. One day, I was crossing to Sacramento across the old American River bridge and went to the old Reclamation District office. I asked them if they knew of any land out here available for lease. This fellow here, now gone, Fitzpatrick was his name, said go down and see that Greek fellow, his name is Zubiri and he's not satisfied with his tenant. So, I went down to see him. He was complaining about the other renter. Natomas district was known for share

rent. I said, "How would you like to get cash rent?" He says, "What's cash rent." "That's where you and I agree for so much an acre and I give you all the money right up front. You can do anything you want with that money. If I fail with the program, it's not your fault, it's my fault. You've got your money and you can do whatever you want with that." And he fell for that. He said, "I never heard of that." Well, that's what cash rent is. I was farming with this fellow John LaFigna in Lodi already — because of him and his extended credit, we were farming over 200 acres of tomatoes, the largest tomato grower in Lodi. So, when I come up here and saw this land here, and told him about that land, I asked to rent from him. So, we started out that way the first year. The second year, my neighbor next to this property over here, next to Zubiri — his name was Frank Frates — he was driving by every day with a new pickup. We still have his pickup yet; we did until recently, then we sold it. He come over and he says, "I've been watching you. You boys really stay on the ball and take care of your crops. How would you like to become a partner with me?" I found out he owned one square mile in here, just north of the Zubiri property — 640 acres. So I says, "Yeah, I'll do that." So, I went over with him and I broke up the partnership with LaFigna[?] and me, LaFigna[?] was very disappointed. Right in between there, we had an opportunity to lease all the land, which is today Arden and — the other one next to it. All the way around the El Camino area. That was all grainland. We could have not only leased it; we could have bought that land. And I asked LaFigna[?] if he would be willing to put up the money. It was over a thousand acres out there then. And he backed out of it. A few years later when he heard what had happened out there, why, ohhhh, he was really sorry that he didn't put up the money. I could have retired as a millionaire then. When he saw that, why, he was really sorry he didn't go in on it. But, he was a millionaire already and older. He had all the problems that he wanted, and naturally he didn't want more.

[00:24:49]

Mr. Farrell: What kind of farming? You were doing tomatoes out here?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, I started out with tomatoes until I got in with this Frates. Then we got into diversifying. Diversified is when you have a main crop and then others that follow. Alfalfa puts nitrogen in the soil. Tomatoes, sugar beets, and corn, and other crops takes the nitrogen out. You keep 500 acres in alfalfa for three to four years and then grow other crops that use the nitrogen. We were the largest ag grower in Natomas. We also supplied all the feed stores in Sacramento County wholesale. We had a wholesale license, charged sales tax and everything.

Mr. Farrell: Did you ever sell stuff down the river to San Francisco?

Mr. Shimada: We hauled way into — I forget the town. It was almost to San Francisco. We hauled a lot of hay to Napa Valley. In Napa Valley, there was a big dairy farm named Zuwissig. We had a 10-wheel truck and trailer, two semis — no three semis. The guy who had the 10-wheel truck and trailer was a private owner. He hauled for us 10 years or more, every day down that way, let alone all the trucks around here to local owners. One of the features we had was deal where you could buy one bale or truckloads at a time. We guaranteed all that we produced. In other words, if you had a semi-load of hay coming to your place and you found some moldy or rusty bales, you could reject the whole load. We had a rejection one time after the truck got up to Yuba City; he phoned in. No sooner than he called in, I had buyers lined up to buy reject hay. Within three miles of where we were, so hey!

[00:27:30]

Mr. Farrell: What would you do with reject hay?

Mr. Shimada: Feed it to the steers, pigs, goats. Goats will eat anything. Steers can eat a lot of dry material that is junky or whatever it is. You know. Dairy cows you have to be very careful.

Mr. Farrell: What about here in Natomas? Did you do much dairy farming?

Mr. Shimada: The biggest dairy farmer out here was the Inderkums.

Mr. Farrell: I've heard that name before.

Mr. Shimada: The Inderkums, Gene Inderkum. I knew the whole family. The son, Gene, operated the La Bou restaurant. We hauled hay there every day, or maybe every other day. The barn that they had the cows in was so full of manure, slushy manure. I'd drive the truck to the barn and never get off the truck. I'd climb the ladder up on top and drop the hay off. I'd never step on the ground because you'd get so full of manure. We wore boots then. That's how dirty a dairy farm was in those days.

Mr. Farrell: I used to live up in Humboldt County on a dairy farm. I know what you're talking about. What about rice? Rice is big here in Natomas, isn't it?

Mr. Shimada: Well, beyond Del Paso Road. That is where your *[unintelligible]*, hard ground is that retains the water.

Mr. Farrell: That's what I've heard. You need hard packed kind of ground.

Mr. Shimada: Here, in this area right in here, you could dig a hole 20 feet deep and there are no rocks, nothing. This is sediment area.

Mr. Farrell: Finer sediments for the rice and the rougher stuff for the—

Mr. Shimada: Rough ground for the rice, which holds water. You need a drainage type of ground for the other crops.

[00:29:50]

Mr. Farrell: What about orchards around here?

Mr. Shimada: Same thing. If you drive along Garden Highway you will see very few pear trees. Used to be a lot of pear orchards all along the Garden Highway. The reason for this is pear trees have big roots, not surface roots, which go way down and can stand the water. You used to see a lot of pear trees along the levee.

Mr. Farrell: I guess you must have seen a lot of these orchards, farms get plowed up and become houses.

Mr. Shimada: Yes. That is after we gave up and started again.

Mr. Farrell: When was that? Pretty recently right?

Mr. Shimada: Well, 1975, something like that. This community was supposed to be a first-class area. Nice homes.

Mr. Farrell: By this community, you mean South Natomas?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, South Natomas. The talk is, the contractors of the building, there was only one builder building in here. Other contractors wanted to get in here. So they went to the city council and bribed the city council to get permission to build apartment houses in here. So that's when the influx of colored people started coming.

Mr. Farrell: They came in because of apartments.

Mr. Shimada: Apartments. Cheap rent. Sublets. That is what drew the, what do you want to call it, the lower-class people. So, crime started. Problems started.

[00:32:08]

Mr. Farrell: It wasn't like that before? Well, what kind of people do we have out here? A lot of Japanese people? A lot of Mexican workers. Do they live out here as well?

Mr. Shimada: Downtown.

Mr. Farrell: Downtown. Came out here to work.

Mr. Shimada: T Street area. Yeah. They came out here to work because of transportation back and forth. It was the closest to town.

Mr. Farrell: Are you the only Japanese family out here?

Mr. Shimada: Yes. There was only one other family that used to live on the end of Truxel Road — no, that was the Chinese garden people, the Fong family. One son is the county assessor, another is sort of the spokesman for the family. They didn't know that I had worked for the grandfather Fong. He had a food market downtown, which is now Capitol Avenue, I believe. They owned land in Terminus, west of Lodi in the river area. I used to drive my T Ford down there many times. They had celery crates in the winter. But anyway, the Fongs asked me to come down and help on their property down there because their tractor broke down. When I got down there, we had tractors in the valley and the tracks were only about 12 inches wide. Down there is peat ground, and therefore if you made it turn, the tracks would dig down and get stuck. So I had put 15-, 20-inch two-by-fours on the track, holding them on. That way it'd keep the track buoyant.

[00:34:24]

Mr. Farrell: You had them attached right to the tire.

Mr. Shimada: Right to the track layer. A little tractor would never work out there.

Mr. Farrell: Right, it was track, like a tank track.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, with that, they could stay up.

Mr. Farrell: It just had wider feet than—

Mr. Shimada: So, the Fongs were surprised that I knew the Fongs down there. Same family.

Mr. Farrell: So, I guess population has really grown.

Mr. Shimada: Oh yes. I've been gone from this area for a number of years now.

Mr. Farrell: So, working on a farm you used to keep some pretty long hours.

Mr. Shimada: Yes. Looking back now I can't imagine all I used to do. Early in the morning, sunrise, I'd be out in the fields until sundown. Then when I was home, after I got married, I told her we'd be living in a small farmhouse. I was hauling fruit. Once she saw that I was gone early in the morning, seldom come home for lunch, she said if I wasn't going to stop trucking she was going to go back home. So, I had to decide which I was going to do. So, I decided to stop trucking.

Mr. Farrell: Good decision. So, farming, at least you got home for dinner, with just farming and no trucking. I guess you got home for lunch, too. I read a little bit of the history of Natomas. Not so long ago, 10 years, back in '86, or so, you had a bit of flooding here.

[00:36:27]

Mr. Shimada: Yes. We used to live in a house, a two-story stucco building on — then it was called Lower Marysville Road, where Silver Eagle comes in. There used to be a gas station there, Tatum's Gas Station. Tatum himself ran it. Across the street there was a mole, you can see it today, there was a high mole. If it flooded, that spot would never get flooded. So, when that flood occurred in Sutter County, I got a lot of phone calls from there asking if they could bring their equipment to my place. I asked why. They said it was the highest place around and wouldn't get flooded.

Mr. Farrell: I heard in '54 the water got pretty high.

Mr. Shimada: I volunteered for levee night watch. I donated 2000 burlap bags to make sand bags. The water got so high it got to their eave of their homes. So, there was danger of the water leaking on this side, all along the Sacramento County line.

Mr. Farrell: So, levee night watch. You walked the levees?

Mr. Shimada: No, I had a four-wheel jeep. I used it to patrol. I had one of those old army jeeps with a big spotlight on it.

Mr. Farrell: So, I guess those levees take a lot of maintenance?

Mr. Shimada: Right.

[00:38:29]

Mr. Farrell: So, is there a big problem with squirrels and gophers?

Mr. Shimada: One of the features of the Garden Highway when it was constructed, it has a sand core. See, for example, if this is the levee here, way down below is a triangular ditch. They pumped the sand from the river into the triangular ditch.

Mr. Farrell: So, there is kind of an inverted triangle right in the middle.

Mr. Shimada: So, when the rodents came in, sand would fall down behind them and lock them in. If the water came in it would drop through the sand.

Mr. Farrell: Pretty clever.

Mr. Shimada: I have pictures of the levee being constructed. I meant to bring them today, but I completely forgot. It shows when this area here was 100 percent underwater. I understand that the name here, Natomas, got its name from the Natomas Dredging Company. Natomas Dredging Company did all the dredging up here in the hills. As far down as the Rancho Cordova area.

Mr. Farrell: Gold dredging.

Mr. Shimada: Gold dredging. You could still see — I don't think you can see it now, it's all been shoved away, and homes built over — the big piles of rocks, all around in that area. When they finished that, they came down here.

Mr. Farrell: I think I read about that. My father, it was during the war he worked for the shipyard down in the Bay Area, said that the Natomas Company quit making dredging equipment and started making equipment for the ships. He came up here and picked up a truckload of something from the Natomas Machine Company. They have gone out of business now. So what year did they build the dredge in the picture you have there?

[00:40:50]

Mr. Shimada: In the 1914 area.

Mr. Farrell: Well, you didn't take those pictures then?

Mr. Shimada: No, I didn't take it. I got it from the Reclamation District. I borrowed pictures from the Reclamation office and I give talks to school classes. They don't owe me anything.

Mr. Farrell: They don't owe you anything. Now, from what you've been telling me, there are a lot of things in your life went on faith. You started out, you got your loans because you built up respect.

Mr. Shimada: Yes.

Mr. Farrell: Then later you got a good reputation for giving out ice cream, and then for giving a free lunch. So. Reputation is an important thing.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, it does mean a lot.

Mr. Farrell: Do you think it means less today than it did in the old days?

Mr. Shimada: That I don't know. I don't make such comparisons. I do a lot of indirect work here in the community through the Lions Club that I organized. It is called the Greater Natomas Lions Club. Through the years we have done a lot in the community. I was given an award by the city council. Mayor Heather Fargo made the presentation. It was on the 10th anniversary of the Greater Natomas Lions Club. It was really something.

Mr. Farrell: That was this year?

Mr. Shimada: No, could it have been 2 years ago?

[00:43:02]

Mr. Farrell: You have done a lot of volunteer activity. Boy Scouts, Lions Club, and now you're working for the schools.

Mr. Shimada: I'm working for the school and am a member of two active Lions clubs. The other club is called the Senator Lions Club. There is an interesting story about that, too. That Lions club was formed because of race prejudice here in the city right after the war. During the war, we who lived in the east got acquainted with the so-called white community and were able to join organizations in that area, Lions Kiwanis, Rotary, and so forth. When they came back here and the Western Defense Command opened up and said we could come back, they tried to transfer their membership and were not accepted. And so these Lions, the Japanese Americans, formed their own club called the Senator Lions Club. The president of the club was a dentist, Dr. [unintelligible] Hayashi[?]. I used to get treatments from him. We got to talking about fraternal organizations. He said how would you like to join a Lions Club? I said that I understood that the Lions Club is only for businessmen, and I'm a farmer. Oh no, he says that is wrong. So that is when I joined the Lions Club under his sponsorship.

[Recording stops and restarts as tape is flipped over.]

[00:45:00]

Mr. Farrell: So, you were saying that you got into the Lions Club as a farmer not a businessman.

Mr. Shimada: I had the impression that the Lions Club was only for businessmen. He corrected me on that, so I joined. Soon as I started attending their meetings, I found that they were all Japanese. The membership was really low — 10, 15. After the meetings they would all go downstairs and play poker. The comment was made at the meeting when we were installed, did we have any questions. I said I sure did. I said how come in your club, living in an American community, you have only Japanese Americans in your club. I said those days are over with. That night I made the motion that the club integrate. There was only one person who did not want to integrate. He was an outspoken person who told dirty jokes at the meeting. Not very good. Since he objected with my motion to integrate, I also made the motion to kick him out. When I moved to integrate, after quite a bit of argument, they finally voted to integrate. They heard that I was right. I started by recruiting a Mexican, then a colored fellow. The Mexican is still a member. The colored was in real estate and he quit because he was not able to sell any sales in real estate. The members saw right away that he was trying to take advantage, make money on us. We're not supposed to push a personal business in the Lions. We're considered to be the world's largest community service organization. When he quit there was another colored fellow that he brought in. He was going to quit, too. I said, "No, you don't quit. Stay with us. I'll be your sponsor." He is still with us today. He said it was because of me that he stayed in. He is a very active member. From that small group our membership now is at 46, and 50 percent or better attend our regular meetings. Another unique feature is at our dinner meeting, our wives come. So that doubles our membership. We also have a very active member who became an international director. He was going to quit Lions, too, until he found out that we integrated. He became super-interested. He became an international director. Today we are now campaigning for him to become second vice president for Lions International. Eventually the goal is to get him to be the [unintelligible], which will happen in Tokyo, Japan at the International Conference there.

[00:49:16]

Mr. Farrell: Do you think you'll be going back to Japan?

Mr. Shimada: I think I'll probably go. So today we are raising funds. He is very popular. He is a strong talker. He doesn't even need a mic. He has a strong voice. He comes across real devoted to Lions. He doesn't belong to any other clubs, just Lions, which is unusual. He is a very successful insurance salesman. He has people working under him to sell insurance for other companies. Most weekends he travels all across the country and Canada doing motivational speaking.

Mr. Farrell: You are still involved with the Scouts, right?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, I've been a member of the Golden Empire Comstock Executive Board for a number of years, until I got involved with the schools. It begins with a breakfast meeting at 7 o'clock. So, generally, I make the motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting, make several motions, and then scam so I could get to the school. So, I asked them to transfer me to the advisory council.

Mr. Farrell: So before, were you a troop leader here in Natomas?

Mr. Shimada: Not here, but my Lions Club sponsors the Boy Scouts. That was another comment that was made: If you are rendering service in the community, you should consider being a sponsor of a Boy Scout troop. You can start out with a Cubbie. So, today my Lions Club sponsors a Cub Pack and a troop. They are still going strong. I act as a coordinator between the club and scout units, and yet I'm still on the advisory council.

[00:52:03]

Mr. Farrell: So you said that right now you're working at this school.

Mr. Shimada: American Lakes.

Mr. Farrell: Was that a recently built school?

Mr. Shimada: Must have been about 14 years ago, because I think it is my 14th year there. The interesting thing about the school — I was on the School Boards for two terms. I heard about these schools in the Los Angeles area and managed to convince the board to take a trip down to LA and see these schools. Fortunately, we got into a school right near Long Beach, with two stories. When you go on the second story, you can see all the classrooms on the first floor. The board was very impressed. They wanted to try it on a new school, American Lakes, that they were rebuilding. We build what you call a pod-type of construction. In our case over here, you have four pods, four rooms in each pod. You can go into any of the four rooms without going outside in bad weather. A cafeteria is attached to it, so from the room you can go to the cafeteria, and on rainy days, the cafeteria is big enough to hold activities in it, and a kitchen is attached to that. We have two pods like that at American Lakes School: the A pod and the B pod. In the A pod, we have what we call the media center and it has a stage and a meeting area so you can hold classes in there, have shows or show movies, big meetings, the PTA meets in there. It is very convenient.

[00:54:24]

Mr. Farrell: So, how's the quality of education around here?

Mr. Shimada: Pretty good. We have a high standard here. We have a really good superintendent. He came from the Elk Grove area. Their loss was our gain. I got some good Lions members from around here. Three elementary school principals are members of our Lions Club. I'm trying to get two more, but they just won't join for some reason. They say they're too busy and just can't schedule another thing. I said if you are interested, you will take the time to schedule it in. I belong to two and I haven't missed a meeting in years at both clubs.

Mr. Farrell: You belong to two?

Mr. Shimada: The Senator and Greater Natomas.

Mr. Farrell: How big is the Greater Natomas Club?

Mr. Shimada: It is a very small, powerful club, like a dynamite. The reason for saying that is, the small amount of members, they can all be depended upon to take on chairmanships, handling responsible positions. The club was known for sponsoring two carnivals a year here in this community. A spring carnival and a fall carnival. The purpose for that, which raises from \$1,000 to \$5,000 or more, which is all put back into the community through — one main thing was they organized and helped build the Jefferson Memorial Park here in Natomas. We also helped with a second park here in the district.

[00:56:41]

Mr. Farrell: How long ago did that Greater Natomas form?

Mr. Shimada: I think it is 12 years ago. We are well-known in the community because of pumping back all this money. It helps all the kids.

Mr. Farrell: You have done a lot of volunteer work. What about others here in Natomas? Are people here in Natomas good at helping out the community?

Mr. Shimada: I guess they are. There is a Natomas Community Association.

Mr. Farrell: Are you a member of that, too?

Mr. Shimada: No. I should go to some of their monthly meetings, but I'm not too good at just going to meetings.

Mr. Farrell: You really want to be doing something.

Mr. Shimada: I like to be active. I also am the vice president of the community library. Our Natomas Lions Club contributes several hundreds of dollars a year for the library to buy all the magazines.

Mr. Farrell: Hm, that can be expensive.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah. We do that every year. Then when the library formed — I forget how I got involved in the library — I have been on the board ever since the library formed. I always stay as the first vice president. That's in preparation for the presidency, but I always turn down the presidency because I'd rather be where I am. I'm the shaker and the mover of the organization. So all the key motions, I make. Also the contacts and making arrangements — I do that.

[00:59:48]

Mr. Farrell: Yes, Denise Modar, she told me you were the real shaker and mover in this oral history project. You really wanted to get it going.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah. I told her not to wait too long to get it going. She put out notices and at the first meeting, 14 people showed up. Gene Inderkum was one of them. There's a Ronald Costa, who is a son of the Costa family, the original pioneers in this community. He passed away just last year, August. I knew that family well.

Mr. Farrell: We will be interviewing him, or one of the members of the family. Why do you think it's so important that we get this all down? That we get all these tapes and transcripts of people from Natomas? Why do you think it is important?

Mr. Shimada: I think it's important — it sustains the importance of the community. It makes it a reason why so many Bay Area people have moved here. When they started coming in is when the community started to grow. Now, with the reputation and the kind of progress that this area has made, the building restrictions are supposed to be up within the next year or so. The building restrictions were put in here until the community could show that it is flood proof. We had a very good drainage system here. I think that was one of the main attractions why people come in. They come up with good ideas, too. They like the schools. The high standard of education. Two of the principals started out at American Lakes School. We indirectly train good teachers who are ready to move to the next level. If you have time, I'd like to introduce you to our superintendent, Dr. General Davie, Jr.

[01:01:48]

Mr. Farrell: I'll make a point of mentioning that name to Denise Modar. What is that name again?

Mr. Shimada: Dr. General Davie, D-A-V-I-E, Jr.

Mr. Farrell: I'll call her tonight.

Mr. Shimada: I'm sure he'll talk with her freely. You tell him that I recommended you come and talk to him.

Mr. Farrell: I know we're supposed to be talking about the past, but what do you think the future holds for Natomas? Big changes are happening now.

Mr. Shimada: Big changes. You're going to see real rapid growth once the building restrictions are lifted. You see a big development in the north, North Natomas. North of freeway 80. In fact, General Davies — part of the plan is for two more high schools being planned, and perhaps more grammar schools. Builders are just aching to get out there and build. Arco Arena will be surrounded. I'll bet people who bought out there are going to be changing their minds. So, all of that is going to develop.

[01:03:22]

Mr. Farrell: So, one day there will be no more room for farmers like you.

Mr. Shimada: I'm retired from it. I'm sure glad I retired. The cost of production farm crops has risen so high. The parts are super high.

Mr. Farrell: Parts — you mean for machinery?

Mr. Shimada: For repair. Machinery is way high. Even corporations couldn't afford to buy it. They have to write it off. Wages are climbing. One of the worst things that's happening is the consumers don't realize how lucky they are to get produce at the market as cheap as they're getting. Only because of the fact that our foreign traders go back into Mexico and get commodities shipped in here, sell it, competing with our local markets. Do you know why that is happening?

Mr. Farrell: Why?

Mr. Shimada: Because we train youngsters here at UCD Agricultural Research School. They graduate and go home to a foreign country, and raise a crop that they learned how to grow here, with labor that is so cheap.

[01:05:05]

Mr. Farrell: Yeah. What about in the '40s and '50s, maybe even later — I guess all the farming around here depended on Mexican migrant laborers?

Mr. Shimada: Primarily Mexican. In fact, I remember one year I pay no attention to whether they were legal or illegal. I had a whole bunch of them working, and the immigration people came in and they told me who they were. They asked me if they could go in and see who they were. I said, sure go on in. If I said no, they would have done it anyway because they have a right to. Then one Mexican was aware, I don't know how he sensed it, he started running. They chased after him. I told the fellow, "Don't run, don't run." I told him in Spanish, "Don't run, don't run." But he still ran, so they hauled him in. The other guys just kept working. This guy was the only one they picked up.

Mr. Farrell: There were probably more, but they didn't run.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah.

Mr. Farrell: What kind of wages did they get?

Mr. Shimada: Oh, wages were cheap then.

Mr. Farrell: I guess prices were cheap then and they made a living.

Mr. Shimada: They couldn't get work elsewhere.

Mr. Farrell: So, they were, I guess, seasonal?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, seasonal. Primarily they would come up, I call it from the south.

Mr. Farrell: Did any of them decide to settle down up here?

Mr. Shimada: One fellow settled down, got married, and they got grandchildren going to the school. "My grandfather knows you, my grandfather knows you." Well, the kids around here, I don't know where they got that impression from, that I was a big landowner. I suppose it was because I farmed this land for so many years, but I didn't own it. I leased.

[01:07:29]

Mr. Farrell: What did you do for equipment? You must have had to buy your equipment?

Mr. Shimada: Oh yeah. I was loaded with equipment.

Mr. Farrell: Do you have some still?

Mr. Shimada: I got nothing now because I auctioned it all off. Talking about equipment, I've been president of the Agriculture Southern Conservation Society (ASCS). I also became a member of the Farmers Home Administration Board, after I finished the ASCS. The secretary made a mistake by showing me a handbook of the Farmers Home. I came across a paragraph where it said no member of the board can apply for a federal loan. When I saw that, I got in touch with the director and I said, "As of today, I resign from the board." He says, "How come? Why?" I say, "You look in your book over there and it says that any member of your board cannot borrow." I said, "I could borrow from your department and the interest rate would be half as much as I could borrow from the bank. That is how cheap it is." I said, "For that reason, I resign." Could you believe it took them two years to replace me? Because, everybody that heard that there was an opening would call me and ask why I resigned. When I told them, they would say, "I need to borrow, too. I can't do it either then." They finally found a chicken farmer from Galt who was independent, didn't owe anybody. So that year I borrowed \$80,000 and bought several new pieces of equipment, to modernize myself. I paid the yearly interest, the interest and the payment up to about three years ago, four years ago. Then I was unable to make those payments because, well, at the time, the commodities were coming in too cheap and the expenses were too high. So, they issued a letter to me to have a public auction, get rid of all the equipment, and retire from farming. So, the amount of money the equipment brought in and the difference from the regional loan would be forgiven. So, I did it. And they have a right to issue that order. So, I did it. Then what happened? That difference they reported to the IRS, and the IRS sends me a letter saying to the effect that I owe interest on that money.

[01:11:54]

Mr. Farrell: Interest on the \$80,000?

Mr. Shimada: Not on the \$80,000. The difference between the equipment that was sold and the balance of the loan. I had to borrow \$6,000 from my insurance company, life insurance. Good thing I had that. The federal government said I saved that money, so I needed to pay interest on it.

Mr. Farrell: Yeah, they get you one way or another.

Mr. Shimada: They get you anyway they can.

Mr. Farrell: You talked a lot about trucking. About trucking all your produce everywhere. When I read back in the history of Natomas, it said that a lot was sent on barges. Did you ever do much of that?

Mr. Shimada: Oh, no I didn't do the barges. No, the shipment on the barges was all from McClellan Field. At that time, they were shipping planes. Four, five, or six planes would come down Lower Marysville Road, down the Garden Highway to the government docks. The docks are still there. That is where that came from. They must have expanded the airfield. They might have expanded a couple of times. So, the larger planes would come in. They didn't have a use for the multitude of small planes.

Mr. Farrell: That airbase, I think it came out there in the late '30s, I think. Anyway, do many people in Natomas work out there at McClellan airbase? Where do most people work now days?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, they still work a lot at McClellan because they changed industries there. It was a repair base for super planes. Now they are letting independent companies rent the buildings. Private companies lease portions of the buildings, hangars. I think that is where a lot of the work is coming from.

[01:13:31]

Mr. Farrell: I guess you saw when they built some of these newer bridges across the river? Did that change things?

Mr. Shimada: It did expedite change. Especially El Camino.

Mr. Farrell: El Camino? You mean the bridge?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Farrell: I think I was reading somewhere that this road, what is the name of this street?

Mr. Shimada: This is Truxel Road.

Mr. Farrell: Yeah, Truxel was the only paved road around here, and it was only paved in about 1955, or something like that.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, real late. It stayed real wide. I think even then they had thoughts of light rail coming through. That is getting stronger and stronger. If you go down 80 now you can see where the original overpass was, and now they are building a second overpass for two-way traffic. One to Arco Arena and now to the airport, and they're already building the laterals, the terminals, out to B area.

Mr. Farrell: Yeah. Arco Arena is only less than about 10 years old, isn't it?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, I guess so. The big one.

Mr. Farrell: How about the airport out there?

Mr. Shimada: The airport's got a second runway operating now.

Mr. Farrell: When did they build that? Was it here when you moved in?

Mr. Shimada: No, it was a little tiny airport then. In fact, before that was built, small planes were landing over here. I forget the name now. It was called the Branstetter Airport that aircrafts were flying in and out of. The dusting planes.

Mr. Farrell: Oh.

Mr. Shimada: From there it expanded out to the big airport.

[01:15:40]

Mr. Farrell: I guess you need a lot of pesticide on tomatoes, don't you?

Mr. Shimada: On tomatoes, yeah.

Mr. Farrell: Do you do it all by aircraft now?

Mr. Shimada: All by aircraft now. I remember when you used to have those hand pumps secured on your back. I kept one just for a souvenir. I remember walking up and down those rows many a time.

Mr. Farrell: Yeah, I've seen people do that. I kind of wonder about inhaling the pesticide. I guess you would wear a mask?

Mr. Shimada: I never wore a mask. I guess we sure took a chance then. I never wore a mask. You would go on the left side of the row — when you'd pump it, the fumes would go away from you. Then the aircraft came in. There was one year Branstetter either hired or he rented — what do you call those planes that fly up and down? Helicopter?

Mr. Farrell: Helicopter.

Mr. Shimada: He had a few right out here on San Juan Road. I think it was San Juan Road. I had this helicopter going down one row, going up, and coming back down on another row. The people started complaining.

Mr. Farrell: Why?

Mr. Shimada: Too much noise. The airplane — *whirrrrrrr*. The helicopter flies low, and they didn't like the noise.

Mr. Farrell: What year was that?

Mr. Shimada: It wasn't that long ago.

Mr. Farrell: I guess I was wondering if older helicopters are more noisy than the new ones?

Mr. Shimada: The new ones are pretty good now.

Mr. Farrell: Course, when you get close to the ground they're all pretty loud.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, the wind comes down.

[01:17:52]

Mr. Farrell: Yes. I guess they are pretty expensive to operate. So, what about ferries going across the river? Before they had bridges they used to come across on a ferry?

Mr. Shimada: Oh yeah, up here where the river, what do you call that, branches and goes up to Woodland? Right there, there used to be an old ferry. It used to go across with a cable.

Mr. Farrell: Oh really.

Mr. Shimada: The cable would wind, and as it'd wind through the wheels, the ferry would cross. I remember — I've it crossed many a time. The schoolteachers would come on the so-called westside traction line. The traction line used to run to Woodland. You've heard those stories?

Mr. Farrell: No, I haven't heard them.

Mr. Shimada: There was railroad tracks on the westside of the river. Most of it's been taken out. Anyway, the schoolteachers used to come out, get on the ferry that crossed the river, and then go a short distance down Garden Highway. There under a big oak tree was where they held the first school in the Natomas District.

Mr. Farrell: Under a big oak tree.

Mr. Shimada: Under a tent under a tree. I have a picture of that. On rainy days, parents would come over and meet her at the ferry, horse and buggy, and take her down.

Mr. Farrell: Horse and buggy. That must have been right around the turn of the century, I guess.

[01:20:00]

Mr. Shimada: I forget. Within the last year, my memory is getting bad for some reason. I'm forgetting dates. I remember events, but I can't pinpoint it down to the dates.

Mr. Farrell: I kind of have that problem myself.

Mr. Shimada: But you can recall it. I can't even recall it. I remember the event, but I can't remember the dates and I wish I could. So I'm making a chronology of all the events that happened in this district, and they go way back to 1908 on up to where American Lakes School is concerned. Many people in the community have been asking me why don't I write a book on the community. If you stop to think about it, there is a lot of research to be done, because I want to cover everything — I don't want to miss anything.

Mr. Farrell: Have you seen the book — the title is, I think it is called the *History of the American Basin*? It's a master's thesis by a student at CSUS. have you seen that book?

Mr. Shimada: I don't think so.

Mr. Farrell: I'll have to loan it to you.

Mr. Shimada: I have that book that has the history of all the people who came and members of the families, but [*unintelligible*] pinpoint it to the progress of the community. Just the history of the people who came.

Mr. Farrell: I'll have to show you this book. It's a good book. It begins with prehistoric times and goes right up to — I think it was written in 1991. Just about Natomas.

Mr. Shimada: Is it written by some local people?

Mr. Farrell: It was written by a student. In fact, I got it out here in my car. I'll loan it to you. You can take a look at it.

[Recording stops and restarts]

[01:22:18]

Mr. Farrell: So, you were on the school board. What do you do on a school board?

Mr. Shimada: A school board makes decisions on policies for the district.

Mr. Farrell: How long ago did you first get involved in that?

Mr. Shimada: It was around — I wish I brought that chronology list. I have it in there. I think I'm going to have to meet with you once more shortly to try to tell all this stuff. And I'd like to be returning your book that you're loaning me.

Mr. Farrell: Ok, that's right.

Mr. Shimada: Why don't we get together once more? I'll get the progress, the chronology, and that way I can tell you more in detail.

Mr. Farrell: Ok, I'll tell you what — yeah, I'll loan you the book and we'll meet maybe here in exactly one week, and we'll do another tape.

Mr. Shimada: Sure.

Mr. Farrell: It might be a long tape. We'll talk as much as we need to do. Well, let's stop it right here then.

[END OF TAPE 1. BEGINNING OF TAPE 2.]

Mr. Farrell: Testing. Ok, this is the second interview with Mr. Paul Shimada for the Natomas Oral History Project, at the South Natomas Library. It is about 2 o'clock. It's October 11, 1996. I'm the interviewer, I'm Paul Farrell. So, Paul, last week we talked about a lot of different things, especially farming. from what I understand there are a lot of Portuguese families here in Natomas. Do you know any of those?

[00:00:43]

Mr. Shimada: From what I have heard, the Portuguese were the dominant people who first came to this area. Amongst those first families were the Barandas, Bastiao families, and their children still live here.

Mr. Farrell: Uh-huh. I think we're going to be interviewing some of those for this project. What kind of farming were they doing? Manuel Baratus — he'll be interviewed.

Mr. Shimada: Barandas. Do you have Dennis Bastiao?

Mr. Farrell: We do. Dennis Bastiao.

Mr. Shimada: He is the grandson of the original Bastiao.

Mr. Farrell: Ah, so the original Bastiao, he came when Natomas was first created?

Mr. Shimada: Yes.

Mr. Farrell: So what kind of farming did he do? Tomatoes like everyone else?

Mr. Shimada: They were diversified.

Mr. Farrell: Diversified. So, they were one of the first people in. What about today? Are there any Portuguese still around?

Mr. Shimada: Amongst the others, could be was the Ferreiras— F-E-R-R-E-I-R-A family. Lauro, I think he lives over there on Garden Highway next to one of the reclamation pumps. He would be able to tell you a lot of things.

Mr. Farrell: Hm. Well, so, you've seen a lot of changes. I heard about these Indian mounds. Have ever you seen them?

Mr. Shimada: I have not seen, but it was pointed out to me the approximate location. It is on the westside of the Garden Highway between the river. The closest residential home right near that area is the Robert Morris family — M-O-R-R-I-S. If you could contact him, he might be able to shed some more light for you.

Mr. Farrell: Hm, you've seen these mounds have you?

Mr. Shimada: No, all I know is the approximate area.

[00:03:01]

Mr. Farrell: I'd like to go out and look at them someday. Well, as a farmer, you've seen a lot of change. I understand you used to own that old house just a few blocks from this library. You brought in a clipping from the newspaper from last year.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, we own that today. It is an interesting story, in that the title of that land passed from Frank Freitas to the Shell Oil Company. That company in turn sold to a construction company. They didn't want the area along the Bannan Slough, so they donated that area to the city. Within that area was a big warehouse, two big storage barns — the north side of each barn had horse stalls, and the center was used to store hay. I tore down the big warehouse and one of the barns for the lumber to save for future use. The second barn I donated to the city, if they would preserve it. So, it wasn't very long, they asked if they could tear it down and rebuild it to meet fire code. To a similarity, which they have done. Portions of the roof have see-through material, so the sunlight can come in—

Mr. Farrell: Uh-huh, solar. Skylights.

Mr. Shimada: Which avoided them to have to go through the trouble of having to put electricity in.

Mr. Farrell: Oh, yes, I see.

Mr. Shimada: Fire hazard, I guess.

Mr. Farrell: Uh-huh. Is it in the same location, or did they move that barn?

Mr. Shimada: It is right in the same location. It is being used very frequently, that barn.

Mr. Farrell: How old is that barn?

Mr. Shimada: It would go back to the 1920s. That two-story house you saw in the publication—

[00:05:22]

Mr. Farrell: That was in the *Natomas Journal* right?

Mr. Shimada: Yes. I'm pretty sure it is.

Mr. Farrell: May '95 *Natomas Journal*.

Mr. Shimada: It was built by the Azevedo family, who were one of the earliest settlers in the community. Portuguese.

Mr. Farrell: Hm.

Mr. Shimada: When the development started, they designed Azevedo Drive to go through the front portion of the house, also through the middle of the shop that we had there at that time, which I have at another place now. I moved the entire shop.

Mr. Farrell: What kind of shop was that?

Mr. Shimada: Maintenance shop.

Mr. Farrell: Oh, I see.

Mr. Shimada: You can drive a lot of trucks and tractors inside and work on them. I had a kind of mechanics pit where you walk down the steps and got down underneath.

Mr. Farrell: Makes it easy to change the oil.

Mr. Shimada: That's one of the reasons, to work on equipment like that, of course. That has been moved and restored on another place where I've been farming for a long time.

Mr. Farrell: Now, you say, the house, you had to move it on account of these roads.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, we had to move it. It was interesting that the city didn't want the house in their park. They told me that if I would move it, they would give it to me for \$1.

Mr. Farrell: Hm.

Mr. Shimada: In the process of the discussion, a fellow that I knew very well, whom I had helped part-time — his name was Sullinger — he happened to come over and said he wanted to see the foundation of the building to see how it was constructed underneath. Sure, so, I let him see it. I found out very

shortly — well, then I called Frank Freitas and said, “Did you send somebody over here to see the foundation of the house, because this fellow is talking about moving it.” He said, “Oh no, I never sent nobody over.” Then I knew that something was wrong. He wanted to get the house and move it across the proposed Azevedo Drive so at his convenience he could move it somewhere else. So, then I found out what he was up to. That made Freitas so angry — I don’t recall just what he did do. But, I was told by the city that if I would move it I would get it for \$1. That is when I was on the Farmers Home Administration Board and I’d found out that a member of the board could not borrow money.

[00:08:26]

Mr. Farrell: Oh, I remember you telling me about that.

Mr. Shimada: So, I resigned from the board. I resigned from the board and borrowed \$80,000. It took me about a month to get it because I had to go through the county office and the state office to be able to do this. So, when I got that loan, I moved the house, bought a lot of new machinery, updated myself on farm machinery, and that’s how I was able to expand my farming more.

Mr. Farrell: It didn’t cost you \$80,000 to move the house.

Mr. Shimada: No, no.

Mr. Farrell: You just needed some new equipment.

Mr. Shimada: I needed some new equipment, etcetera.

Mr. Farrell: Is it easy to move a house?

Mr. Shimada: Not very easy, but the fellow who moved it for us was a professional mover, a fellow by the name of Montgomery, and he moved that whole house intact, including the marble porch. But, he set the house down in the wrong spot. I had two big lots there. He set it down straddling the two lots. I was in Washington, D.C., at that time. I was Senator Hayakawa’s agricultural assistant.

Mr. Farrell: Oh.

Mr. Shimada: That is another story.

Mr. Farrell: Well, we’ll have to talk about that story. What year was that?

Mr. Shimada: In the ’70s. So, I had to come back and recheck the location of the house. I found out that Montgomery had set it down wrong. Montgomery had to come out at his own expense to move it over to where it should have been.

Mr. Farrell: Hm.

Mr. Shimada: But, in that process of picking it up and moving it sideways, it cracked the marble porch. Also, the bricks front and side. So, we had to fix all that.

[00:10:33]

Mr. Farrell: Oh, that’s too bad about the house. What street is the house on now?

Mr. Shimada: It's on Bannon Creek.

Mr. Farrell: Bannon Creek.

Mr. Shimada: You just go down the block on Azevedo, turn right on the first cross street which is Bannon Creek Drive. You'll see the house on your left.

Mr. Farrell: I'll have to drive over there and take a look. I'll do that right after we finish talking. So — oh, I'm sorry, were you going to say something?

Mr. Shimada: The interesting thing about the house is, they constructed wood, it had real fancy wood designs inside, dining room, living room. They have stars in the corners, big stars, about two and one-half foot square. The stars are all made with different-colored wood, all laid in there.

Mr. Farrell: Oh. Uh-huh.

Mr. Shimada: All laid in there. So, it is very attractive.

Mr. Farrell: Ah, so that's a house from the 1920s.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah.

Mr. Farrell: They don't make them like that anymore.

Mr. Shimada: No, and the rooms are all big. Twice as big as rooms today. Those years the families were big. They also had all their farm workers there at the house. So, the basement was constructed as a second kitchen.

Mr. Farrell: Hm.

Mr. Shimada: There is a full level of the house in the lower basement. There is where they cooked all the food for their workers.

Mr. Farrell: Hm. Wow. Well, what happened there. You said you went to Washington, D.C.

[00:12:36]

Mr. Shimada: Yes. There is another interesting facet of my involvement here in the community. I was a Farm Bureau President two terms. On my second term as Farm Bureau President, at a state convention, I was nominated from the floor to be a director of the State Board of Directors. I won with no opposition. I guess they knew my name; they always seemed to know. So, I got on the State Board of Directors. While I was serving on the State Board of Directors, news came across to the effect that Senator Hayakawa, being Canadian — originally a Canadian citizen, became a U.S. citizen — wanted someone familiar with agriculture to be his ag assistant. They wanted to know if anyone was interested; the State Board wanted to know if anyone was interested. There was no response momentarily, so I raised my hand and said yes, I'd come serve. He brought his staff out to interview me. We had a long talk at lunch out here near Vallejo. They had a place picked out that they wanted to go.

Mr. Farrell: You were there with Senator Hayakawa.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, so, I spent almost a year with him. Almost a year with him. He had an executive director who was very obdurate. An ego-type of a fellow.

Mr. Farrell: Big ego, huh?

[00:14:29]

Mr. Shimada: Egotist. Wanted to get all the credit from the senator for doing all the things that he had to do. So, I was working — unknowingly, I was working against this grain. I found this out afterwards, after I quit the office. Agricultural problems would come up not only from farmers in California through the state farm bureau, or directly, but other state farmers were calling me. I asked them, “How come you are calling this office when your own state has agriculture people who should be familiar with all your parcels? Our people are not on the ball.” They can’t answer the questions, so they come to me. When they come to me, instead of passing the news upstairs, which takes days and days to funnel around, why, I go directly to a department of consumers in the national office and get the answer right then, that day or within two, three days. And I feed it back to the person of concern. Well, then after all this happened — and my weekly report, I put it in and hand it in — they didn’t like that. When that came to light, I said, “I’m not interested in working for you.”

Mr. Farrell: Why is it they didn’t like that you were doing a good job?

Mr. Shimada: You could see it was good, but they didn’t. They wanted it to come from them. They wanted to contact them. Well, that takes days. They put their conversations through a typing crew, they had a typing crew of, I don’t know how many people. Well, I avoid all that. They had a legal secretary, too. She finally pushed me out the door, too. I said I don’t need all that. I didn’t need the job in the first place. So, I resigned. When I resigned and came home, they also had a San Francisco office and a Los Angeles office, so they all knew me. The fellow in the San Francisco office, he called up within two weeks, and he said, “I know what will happen, but would you help me out?” I says, “Sure, I’ll help you out.”

[00:17:02]

Mr. Farrell: This was the San Francisco office of what?

Mr. Shimada: Hayakawa.

Mr. Farrell: Oh, ok.

Mr. Shimada: Hayakawa had two principal offices here in California. He said, “We had a lady who volunteered to help organize the non-constituency council for the senator, and in two years she did nothing.” So, would I do it? So, I come into the state chamber of commerce, the secretary of whom I knew — I can’t recall the name right now, who he is. He became a big board member of SMUD.

Mr. Farrell: I don’t know.

Mr. Shimada: Anyway, he says, “Paul we’ll take care of it for you, don’t worry.” Within two weeks, they had over a hundred and some odd heads of corporations in the Sacramento area willing to serve on this constituency council. So, when the senator came, for them to have an opportunity for them to meet him and get acquainted, I arranged for a big dinner affair here at the Holiday Inn. We filled up the whole auditorium, first floor. The senator was really flabbergasted. So, every time when he came from

Washington to the state Capitol for a visit, he would arrange a date in advance and we would go out to lunch and reminisce about things.

Mr. Farrell: Reminisce about things.

Mr. Shimada: Yes.

Mr. Farrell: What is Hayakawa like? Is he a nice guy?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, I would say he is. He's the one who started English to be the U.S. language.

Mr. Farrell: I didn't know he did that.

Mr. Shimada: You didn't know that? Yes, in fact I belong to that organization. I sent in a contribution the other day.

Mr. Farrell: What is the name of that?

Mr. Shimada: U.S. English.

Mr. Farrell: U.S. English. Yeah, I've heard of that.

Mr. Shimada: Let English be the official language of the United States. There was a lot of opposition to that. Why should we in the national government have several languages which would require all the Congress and representatives to be able to understand? Several languages, with several interpreters. It would cost a lot of money.

[00:19:46]

Mr. Farrell: That organization is just concerned about the government use of English?

Mr. Shimada: Right, exactly. Just the government.

Mr. Farrell: Wow, I didn't realize Hayakawa was involved with that.

Mr. Shimada: Yes, he was the originator of that.

Mr. Farrell: I saw him a lot on TV about 10 years ago with the Iran Contra scandal. Was he the chairman of that? That investigation?

Mr. Shimada: That I don't know.

Mr. Farrell: Yes, he was on TV every day. He was a good man. I didn't realize he was a Canadian.

Mr. Shimada: He started out in Canada.

Mr. Farrell: Then he moved to Hawaii, did he?

Mr. Shimada: No, he didn't go to Hawaii. He visited there probably a lot of times. He was a U.S. senator. He was the head man of the San Francisco State College.

Mr. Farrell: S. I. Hayakawa? I'm thinking of the other guy. I'm thinking of the wrong guy. Senator Hayakawa. Senator Inouye. I'm thinking Senator Inouye and you're saying Hayakawa — that's the mistake I made. Of course, S. I. Hayakawa. He died a while back.

Mr. Shimada: Not too long ago. Maybe five years ago.

Mr. Farrell: He was an outspoken controversial senator.

Mr. Shimada: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Farrell: Interesting guy.

[00:21:09]

Mr. Shimada: One of the habits that he had was falling asleep in the senate hearings. So, I used to go there just to cover his tail, in case. I went upstairs to a section that said, "Out of State Visitors," or something like that, all dressed in a suit and a tie. The security people come by and said, "You don't belong here. You belong over here with the higher echelon people, the congressional, political people." I said, "No, I'm just a flunky for him. If I don't belong here, I'll just go downstairs and be with him down there, then." He used to fall asleep.

Mr. Farrell: What did you do? Did you wake him up then?

Mr. Shimada: I kind of— *[Laughter]*

Mr. Farrell: You would kind of kick him with your feet under the table?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah. But I made notes all the time.

Mr. Farrell: I remember a quote he made about the Panama Canal: "We stole it fair and square. It's our canal."

Mr. Shimada: *[Laughter]*

Mr. Farrell: He had some interesting comments, that Hayakawa.

Mr. Shimada: And then another interesting this is that senators have their own dinner room. It is real fancy. I was given permission to take any of my friends who wanted to go for lunch or dinner there. So, I used to take all my friends who came to visit me from this area. Some came just out of curiosity, they come to see me and what the office is like. *[Laughter]* They must have felt like big shots to go in there. I'd say, "See that fellow there, he is so and so. See him, he is so and so." The senators have their own private elevators going up and down. I always would ride in the senators elevator because it's faster. The same way with the underground, what would you call them, subway trains, from one building to another. The front two cars are reserved for congressional people.

Mr. Farrell: I heard about that train. Well, we better stop talking about Washington and start talking about Natomas.

Mr. Shimada: *[Laughter]* About Sacramento.

[00:23:53]

Mr. Farrell: Yeah. Well, anyway let's get back to Natomas. Well, that was about Natomas — you were on the farm board, of course. Anyway, you were a farmer. You were your own boss. Nowadays, a lot of people, everybody — back then, nowadays — everybody looks up to somebody who can be their own boss, run their own business. What was it like? Was it pretty difficult? Was it something you just naturally did?

Mr. Shimada: No. I give a lot of credit to the years of leadership training that I got through scouting as a kid. I went up through the ranks and was a scoutmaster.

Mr. Farrell: Of course, your father died, and you took over the farm when you were 16 years old?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, yeah. Because of my scouting background — I used to be a real backward person, shy.

Mr. Farrell: Oh. Uh-huh.

Mr. Shimada: But the kids in my patrol always woke me up because, I don't know, perhaps because they had a lot of respect for me. Anyway, because they were pushing me up, forcing me to take the leadership training, etcetera. So, I took them to improve myself. That is why leadership work doesn't bother me.

Mr. Farrell: Hm. Running your own business, I guess toward the end, as things became more expensive, it became more difficult?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah. It became more difficult because of competitive prices on the commodities, the raise and the returns that we got. As the years went by, the prices of the equipment went sky high, along with the parts to repair them. The income from the products raised couldn't catch up with them.

Mr. Farrell: Hm.

Mr. Shimada: One of the reasons why our commodities that we raised was cheaper was because of our mission at UC Davis agriculture school. We trained students in our ways of production. Then after graduation, these students went back home to their own countries and raised the same products there, but land is cheap, labor is cheap. They can afford to sell to our importers and our importers can undersell the commodity.

Mr. Farrell: Hm, so it's really—

Mr. Shimada: It's a wild cycle.

Mr. Farrell: Yes, it is a cycle.

[00:26:35]

Mr. Shimada: That's why today, and for years back, you'll find when you're in the San Diego area, fleets of trucks, vegetable trucks, coming from Mexico into California, for distribution. Frankly, that's because our big corporations are located in Mexico because of cheap land, cheap labor.

Mr. Farrell: Yeah. A company I used to work for, I was a machinist, moved to a place called Otay Mesa, which is just on the other side of the border from San Diego, because of cheap labor.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, you can afford to raise it [*unintelligible*] than here. They can compete with our labor.

Mr. Farrell: Well, we're supposed to be talking about the past, but what do you think of the future for a small farmer? Can a small farmer survive anymore?

Mr. Shimada: No.

Mr. Farrell: No? No chance huh? It's got to be big, or—

Mr. Shimada: Then the wages are going up. It is about time it is going up. But, the little fellow can't afford to hire these workers. Because whatever crops are raised at a certain time, then it's gone and you have to find another job. Then you have to find another job. So, the worker goes to the big farmers who has jobs all year around.

Mr. Farrell: Hm. Well, in Natomas, more and more farms are disappearing, huh? I kind of wonder what's caused that?

Mr. Shimada: They're disappearing because of encroachment or developments.

Mr. Farrell: They are losing good farmland.

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, yeah. They say the soil right here, you can go down 20 feet and not find a rock. It's soft sediment. The closer you get to the river, to Garden Highway, you can find clay type of soil, heavy, that doesn't drain too well.

[00:28:43]

Mr. Farrell: So, the lighter stuff is farther from the river?

Mr. Shimada: The lighter soil is on top, and down below is that clay muck stuff. That's why they raise pear trees. Pear trees have deep rooting system.

Mr. Farrell: Have they ever grown cotton here in Natomas?

Mr. Shimada: No, no. Not that I know of.

Mr. Farrell: They have grown rice haven't they?

Mr. Shimada: Where they grow rice is Del Paso Road and north. Reason is, the soil is different than down here. There is more clay soil, harder. Hard pan ground underneath, which retains the water. Here, you put the water in and the next day it is gone.

Mr. Farrell: Hm. Well, you have seen a lot of growth here in Natomas. You mentioned earlier before we turned on the tape about a new group who works with the police force? What was that?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, there is a volunteer group and — I think it is SNFUA? South Natomas — something Association. I can't think of the lady's name who organized it.

Mr. Farrell: What does the group do?

Mr. Shimada: They patrol certain areas that they are assigned to here within the South Natomas Community. Report in to headquarters.

Mr. Farrell: So, you have a little more crime than you've had in the past, have you?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, that is because of the developments of the apartment complexes, with cheaper rent.

[00:30:34]

Mr. Farrell: What about the fire department? Have they built any new fire—

Mr. Shimada: We have a very good fire department here on Truxel Road. It is about a quarter mile north of El Camino.

Mr. Farrell: What about in the old days? Did you have good fire protection back then?

Mr. Shimada: It seemed like it. This fire department was stationed over there on Elkhorn Road about a half a mile east of Garden Highway. That used to be the headquarters of the fire department. The nearest one to it I believe was in North Sacramento area. Arden Way crossing Del Paso Road, there is a big fire station there.

Mr. Farrell: Well, back when you moved here, back in '48, did everyone have a telephone in their farmhouse?

Mr. Shimada: I think most everyone did. I never thought about checking that. Everyone had phones. I did.

Mr. Farrell: They did. Well, I guess, if you don't have a phone you, can't call the fire department.

Mr. Shimada: That's right.

Mr. Farrell: You'd better hope that all the neighbors see the smoke, huh?

Mr. Shimada: Yes.

Mr. Farrell: Well, what else can you tell me about Natomas that you think might be interesting to people? Have we talked about everything we can talk about?

Mr. Shimada: Well, the thing that is close to our airport, I think within five miles of our metro airport. The airport has expanded and now has practically doubled its capacity with the second runway. Big commercial airlines fly into here. I think you can get on a plane here now, bypass San Francisco, and go to Hawaii.

[00:32:58]

Mr. Farrell: I read in the paper that they are going to have Mexican airline fly directly into this airport. Finally, it really will be international. It is called international already anyway, isn't it?

Mr. Shimada: Yes, it is. We have good weather here. Not very many days that we get fogged in here, in the winter. Very few days. They are able, somehow by instrument, to land easily. Down in the Bay Area, they run into all kinds of problems.

Mr. Farrell: Well, and you have to drive down to San Francisco. What does it take, about an hour and a half to drive down there?

Mr. Shimada: Yeah, yeah. It used to take two hours, but since the highway has been improved, there is hardly any stops at all.

Mr. Farrell: Well, what else shall we talk about? I guess we don't have to fill up the tape.

Mr. Shimada: We don't have to.